

### Cautionary Information for Parents: The “Choking Game”

Parents should be aware that some Newton students have recently been engaging in one particularly dangerous behavior known as **the “choking game” or “Space Monkey.”** This game involves cutting off the oxygen supply to achieve a brief high. The children (typically early adolescents) may choke themselves using a rope or belt, or their friends may cut off their air supply for them. The time between experiencing the high and passing out is short— a matter of seconds. If oxygen is continuously cut off for three minutes, the central nervous system starts to fail. **Children have died from this activity rather than waking up after losing consciousness.** Coma, seizures and other injuries may also result.

The game is often incorrectly perceived as a “safe” way to get high because it doesn’t involve alcohol or drugs. **It is not safe.** As with alcohol and drugs, students may feel peer pressure to participate. The approach of summer with more unscheduled time may exacerbate this problem. This is a good time to talk with your children about making responsible decisions.

There are many other names used to refer to this behavior. Some are: pass-out game, suffocation roulette, scarf game, American dream, flat liner, California choke, airplaning, cloud nine, etc.

**Warning signs** a child may have engaged in this behavior include:

- Discussion of the game or its aliases
- Bloodshot eyes
- Marks on the neck
- Wearing high-necked shirts, even in warm weather
- Frequent, severe headaches
- Disorientation after spending time alone
- Increased and uncharacteristic irritability or hostility
- Ropes, scarves, and belts tied to bedroom furniture or doorknobs or found knotted on the floor
- The unexplained presence of dog leashes, choke collars, bungee cords, etc.
- Petechiae (pinpoint bleeding spots) under the skin of the face, especially the eyelids, or the conjunctiva (the lining of the eyelids and eyes)

Additional information, including a research study, is available online from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

[http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/duip/research/choking\\_game.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/duip/research/choking_game.htm)

If you have questions, please contact your school nurse or guidance counselor, or the Health & Human Services Department at (617) 796-1420.